

# THE HERMIT THRUSH

SELECTED POEMS

STEPHEN CHALMERS







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BY  
STEPHEN CHALMERS

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## TO—

My friend, who bears a name greater than king's,\*  
And lives to that high title like a prince;  
Not one whose blood is pale from surfeitings,  
But as the good Haroun, or another since—  
More of our kind—"The Man o' Ballinbreigh;"  
Scotland's King Jamie, who, in hose and shoon,  
Walked through his land in weather dry or dreigh;  
Shared brose and bannocks 'neath a storm-ring'd moon,  
By camp or tavern, biggin or cot on the hill;  
Hearing his people's woe, complaint, or need;  
Nodding his head in sympathy until,  
The moment ripe to turn the magic ring  
(Which from his finger cried, "*This is the king!*"),  
He changed beggar pretense to royal deed.

"My friend," I say—and saying, proud am I—  
Reminds me of that kindly beggar-king;  
Yet sometimes of a Prince born not so high,  
Who in the darkest byeways flashed no ring,  
But walked as Man and Brother with the rest  
(The Son of God humbly a Beggar-Guest),  
Yet leaving, as He passed, a radiance  
By which the blind might see, the cripple walk,  
The broken lift their heads, the children dance,  
The unhappy smile, and souls, long-muted, talk!

Without irreverence this thing I say.  
There is in us, in the worst as in the best,  
Something of Christ, stifle it as we may;  
And he, my friend,  
Perhaps honors that Gift more than the rest.

\*WALTER SCOTT



## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Some of these verses were written at sea ; some on the long trail by heather, palm and pine. Many blossomed on that fruitful tree which grows in the "south-east corner" of *The New York Times*. Some of them have been set to music and sung by singers great and near-great. Twice have I seen quotations from them in standard novels. Others are leaves from yesterday's magazines, and a few first saw light in a little newspaper once published in an Adirondack forest-village. If here and there the lines seem to reflect alternating sunshine and shadow, rebellious storm and philosophic calm, they may encounter similar weather in the moods of others, and bring to the latter a little of the light of fellow-feeling, the comfort of a common understanding, at the close of the Long Day.

S. C.



## CONTENTS

THE HERMIT THRUSH:	3
THE CLOCK:	4
FROM THE INSIDE, OUT!:	6
TO A SPECKLED TROUT:	8
THE PAGAN:	9
SHE:	11
DISCOVERIES:	12
REBELLION:	14
BIRD SANCTUARY:	16
THE GALLERY AND THE GODS:	17
THE NEW PHYSICIAN:	18
A TRUTH:	19
"ROMEO AT MANTUA":	20
IN THE DITCH:	21
THE VOICE OF THE CITY:	22
THE CLOISTER:	23
"I WILL NOT BE SHUT IN!":	24
RESURRECTION:	26
THE BOTTOM OF THE WELL:	28
THE GYPSY HEART:	29
REDHEART SINGS:	31
TEMPUS FUGIT:	32
SNOW:	33
ZERO:	34
PACIFIC SUNSET:	36
THE NIGHTINGALE:	37
OLD MANUSCRIPTS:	38
FAME:	40



## CONTENTS

"ALLENBY ENTERS JERUSALEM!":	41
THE STAR-GAZER:	42
THE ROCK!:	43
TRAVEL TALES:	45
THE GREAT HOUR:	46
TRANSITION:	47
THE MYSTERY:	48
THE SUN-WORSHIPPER:	49
HOME:	51
THE GILDING-STAR:	53

# THE HERMIT THRUSH



## THE HERMIT THRUSH

My greater song is soundless,  
As when the forest's pregnant silences  
Stir in earth's womb  
Music unborn—of souls singing in dreams—  
Lifting to skies, eternally expectant,  
A chant unechoing—endless!

Betimes from the full heart  
Bursts forth the uncontainable *magnificat*—  
A trembling note, groping the long-lost key,  
That tunes with this infinity.

But soundless again I fall,  
Silenced by mine own daring,  
And deeper sink  
Into that brooding womb of listening whispers—  
The solitude,  
Where God still travails o'er His mighty theme,  
The seventh day undeclared!

## THE CLOCK

Youth brags: "Time drags!  
The morn of waiting lags.  
Each yesterday is nothing in no past.  
The insufficient hour is overcast,  
And the long days over-last!"

Youth sits by the open door,  
Stripping the rose's petals to the core—  
Searching for beauty under beauty's thought;  
Hating dull virtue, lured by things untaught;  
Unheeding the old clock, which patiently  
Doles out the treasure-moments of each day,  
For discontent to take  
And jeweled mud-pies make!

Age sighs: "Time flies!  
The rose withers and dies.  
Dawn passes and speeds to the yellow afternoon,  
Dusk, and the cold, dead moon—  
Too soon!"

Age sits by the ashen hearth,  
Counting the moments, jewels of great worth;  
Hearing the rush of feet, the whirl of wings,  
While the old brazen clock chuckles and flings—  
Oh, the pity of it!—  
Pearls in a bottomless pit!



Oh, mystery no less than death!  
Invisible angel, Time, only whose breath  
Touches our consciousness! I charge you—**Stay!**  
Or give assurance there will come One Day  
That knows no close;  
Only the Dawn and the Eternal Rose.

## FROM THE INSIDE, OUT!

I am a captive  
Within a prison cell,  
Which has two windows facing a mystic world.

I look out o'er the scene,  
Not sharing it.  
I see the comings, goings, all the travail  
Of those who move across it;  
And I learn  
That this thing is called Life.

I hear its sounds, not knowing what they mean,  
Save as reiteration makes familiar  
Matters co-ordinate.  
Now one sheds tears, striking a dolorous key,  
And now one laughs, clacking like some loose wheel;  
Some sit, stand, rush about—but all  
Aimless, it seems, though each may have some motive . . .  
Doubtless each has some motive.

They are all strange to me,  
As I to them.  
Yet sometimes they make pause, and look  
In through my windows—only a moment's glance;—  
Then hurry on, as if sudden ashamed  
To find they stared upon a naked soul.  
But one who understood  
Once lingered, smiled, and said:

"I, too, am captive—  
Even as those you watch and think are free—  
Within a prison cell,  
Which has two windows facing a mystic world.

"Into each other's windows we may look ;  
Our hands may even reach and clasp  
Together o'er the space between these bars ;  
Still are we separate !  
Yet we may speak in symbols and, in time,  
Arrive at some degree of comprehension,  
Each of the other !"

I have no memory  
Of how, or when, I thus became a captive  
Within this prison cell ;  
Nor what was my offense.  
But this much I have learned :  
It boots not to revile this present state,  
Nor batter 'gainst these walls.  
The Power that placed me here,  
When Time, as men do reckon, is fulfilled,  
Will turn a key within these rusty wards ;  
And I shall leave an empty cell behind,  
And mingle with my peers !

## TO A SPECKLED TROUT

Dappled by the sunlight,  
    Twinkling in the burn;  
Tinted by the moonlight;  
    Freckled by the fern.  
Like some jeweled scimitar's  
    Leaping, flashing blade,  
Shot with sheen of crusted gold,  
    Ruby, sard and jade!

Born beneath the rainbow,  
    Where the sun has kissed  
Sleepy stars of morning,  
    Veiled in bridal mist.  
Never art can imitate,  
    Never artist fix  
Hues that change as light and mood,  
    Touched with water, mix!

Princess of the brook linn,  
    Whose lure, more than mine,  
Binds me to your sweet will  
    With a silken line.  
What is love but cruelty?—  
    Love, which cannot die,  
Slaying love for Love's sake  
    In perversity!

## THE PAGAN

No church knows me? . . No fane of wood or stone,  
Save as in this cathedral no man made,  
And man could only mar who would improve.  
Here cloisters are, dim-lit with moon-shot jade;  
And priestly shadows 'mong them ghostly move,  
Summoned to *Lauds* by th' insistent brook's bell tone.

Here, adown verdant aisles, rivers of light,  
Filter through fretted windows, leaf'd and branched;  
Gleam on hoar pillars, fluted, upward launched,  
Upholding high heav'n's roof with patient might—  
Great boles of red and brown; ancient—austere;  
Garbed in their Order's sombre green, moss-lined;  
That stand to pray, bending only to hear  
The universal anthem of the wind!

Religion? . . None . . . Yet here, at break of day,  
And at high noon, and in the twilight hour,  
I worship from a wordless ritual;  
Hymn without praise; accept unthinkingly,  
Rock and ravine, torrent and quivering flow'r—  
The majesty and glory of it all! . . .

The mystery of an unfolding fern,  
And how the fallen leaves together lie  
In a design man's touch forever spoils.  
And I perceive—believe!—where'er I turn,  
A Master-Hand is here, a Master-Eye,  
That on a Master-Theme still broods and toils!



I know not God? . . . The thought's beyond my ken . .

Yet here I seem to sense a Presence swaying—  
Some mighty Cause and Governance; and then  
I think (perhaps but ancient fancy playing),  
Among the great trees, treading softly, slowly;  
Come, as the Springtide, to restore and bless;  
Radiant in splendor, yet—as Love is—lowly,  
Again One walks the whispering wilderness.

Lo! from his tears crimson and white flow'rs spring,  
And from his footprints purple petals spread . . .  
The brook's high bell-note falls to a muted ring,  
And the hushed forest bows its late-proud head  
. . . . Even as I.

## SHE

Fair as a flow'r was she ; for when she smiled,  
It was to me a gleam from some dappled pool,  
Tinting a primrose.

Fairer than night was she ; for when her eyes  
Arose to mine, their modesty rebuked  
The Summer stars.

And O, as the dawn was she ; for when she came  
Over the heath at daybreak, envious Night,  
Drawing her mantle, fled, leaving a trail  
Of tears upon the grass.

# DISCOVERIES

## I

When I was young the world was old;  
New only as to one come late  
To hear its ancient stories told  
Afresh—of Nineveh and Tyre;  
Atlantis drowned and Rome afire;  
Moss-grown Romance; dead love and hate,  
Buried with Time, or out of date;  
Colorless—cold!

Ah, yes! The world is very old.  
Youth, in its day, is born too late  
Ever again, so hotly bold,  
To sally forth in shining mail;  
Dying for Love; seeking the Grail;  
Challenging Fate . . . .  
The world has grown too staid and cold  
To hammer at the postern gate!

## II

As I grew old the world grew young!  
As if it never had waxed hoar;  
Or cycles of progression swung  
Earth's Summer to my Winter side;  
Bared undreamed coast-lines, as my tide  
Ebbd from the shore;  
And old Romance's young moon hung  
Against the Egypt night once more!

Ah! Memory's gaze is ever young.

Now, looking back the sunny slope,  
Behold Youth's eyes, up-questing flung,  
O'ershot Romance along the way  
(That beggar-lad who bade him stay?);  
Utterly missed the Present Day  
In reaching for the Morrow's Hope,  
The clouds among!

### III

Is there still time? The world's yet young!  
'Tis but November sneers at May,  
Its own romance unsung.  
We only have un-learned to play—  
Forgot Romance's tongue!

## REBELLION

To wake at morn,  
And hear the little laugh  
Of the lake-wind in the trees;  
To watch at dawn  
The earliest sunbeam kiss  
The mist-crowned, towering peaks  
And glide down to the plains.

Ah, that is Life!  
Not this:—

To wake at morn,  
And hear the swelling roar  
Of Man, Beast and Machine,  
Toiling in murky air  
And a city's sweat!

At noon to dream  
Where Nature's bowers are hid  
Beneath an arch  
Of twined and intersticing vines,  
While on the air  
Quivers the chanting of the sighing woods,  
And the songs of mating birds.

Ah, that is Life!  
Not this:—  
At noon to pause,  
And lay aside the pen for one brief hour:  
Then to return, as I did yesterday,



Will do tomorrow and on all tomorrows—  
Oh, Fool, Machine, and Slave!

Again at dusk,  
To watch the sun's last glow  
Fade in the west;  
To feel Earth's grand transition  
From day to night—  
That moment when the world  
Pauses and knows itself!  
The Angelus chimes  
And echoes 'round the Earth;  
Here the Muezzin's call;  
There a child's lullaby;  
And now a poor serf's prayer . . .  
Earth's evensong!

To hear that is to live!  
Not this:—  
To breast the roaring surge  
Of thousands, pale and tired, dead in soul,  
Crowding with merciless haste toward home.  
Home? . . .  
Past ere the sweet of home has touched the sense!  
To toil that we may sleep,  
That better we may toil;  
To toil that we may eat,  
That better we may toil  
Ay, that is Life; but still—  
But still we dream!

## BIRD SANCTUARY

I know a place where wild flowers spread  
Fairest for reverent mortal tread ;  
Where trees cathedral shadows fling  
O'er aisles where winged seraphs sing,  
In sanctuary.

I know a place of woodland bowers,  
Mansions of moss in tree-top towers,  
Where lyric love the whole day long,  
A choir uplifts in simple song,  
In sanctuary.

I know a place where, but had I  
Wings of a bird, I fain would fly,  
That He Who marks the sparrow's fall,  
Might hear my grateful morning call,  
In sanctuary !

## THE GALLERY AND THE GODS

As other minstrel bards, time was when I  
    Played in the market-place and tavern taps,  
    Singing of things I loved not much, perhaps,  
Setting my pitch to key the common cry;  
My food applause, perfunctory, 'mid gales  
    Of mirth o'er jest at women, wine or cards;  
    Yet half repaid sometimes in coin of the bards  
When some song of my heart-strings hushed these tales—

When voices dropped and the jest died unborn  
    (For ears fell traitor to the raconteur),  
    As if some half-lost memory entered there,  
Of woods and waters and the wet-rose morn—  
Till one would ask: "What song is that you sing?"  
    As well mere roofs might ask what song the wind  
    Sings when it sounds like the color to the blind!  
But I would say: "'Tis but a little thing . . ."

Oh, give me the sky to write my words upon  
    In water from some rill beyond man's ken!  
    Give me a waving reed to be my pen,  
And tint my thoughts with hues of Autumn dawn!  
And let me sing the songs I learned from these—  
    Fled from the babel of the market-place,  
    High on the mountain of the listening face,  
Tuning my strings to brooks, and rocks, and trees!

## THE NEW PHYSICIAN

If I, who only sing, in other ways  
    Could bring refreshment to the sick-room days,  
Where you, who lie and listen, hear the rain  
    Throbbing against your window like dull pain.

Then would I change my state to many things—  
    A ray of golden sun, a bird that sings,  
A woodland breeze, a wave-beat up the shore—  
    And come, a thousand memories, to your door.

Then all your weary hours would I fill  
    With forest odors, music of tumbling rill,  
Sun, moon and stars in old Romance's land,  
    Gleaming where ripples kiss the lipping sand.

There many a whim in human shape should range  
    Across the stage in many a subtle change;  
Laughter and Love—all things but Tragedy;  
    Beauty-with-Joy the theme of every play!

There birds should lift their matin-song; and earth  
    To those, her fairest children—flowers—give birth.  
And you should see the wondrous forest-dawn,  
    And the sea's splendor ere the sun is gone.

If I, who only sing, could magic turn,  
    Conjure in mirror, pour from enchanted urn,  
Such things made even half-real, 'twere not vain  
    To be a poet ministering to pain!

## A TRUTH

Did you not hate old Winter's croak,  
    How could you love the Summer so?  
Did you not reel beneath the yoke,  
    How very tiring rest would grow.

If all the pains of earth were dead,  
    Joy would entail its own defeat.  
If death were robbed of all its dread,  
    Life would be robbed of all its sweet.

Thank God for everything in life!  
    The big and little, sweet and sour.  
Peace is the child of stirring strife,  
    And pain the mother of all power!

## “ROMEO AT MANTUA”

(“How now, Balthasar! . . . How fares my Juliet?”)

You spoke to her of me?  
Did a faint smile  
Tremble upon her lips?  
How did it seem to be?  
Did she a moment's while,  
As one who sees far ships,  
Look past you? Did her eyes  
Not light a little? Or the sea  
Of her blue vision dim as in a haze  
Of lingering gaze?  
A tide of color rise,  
Or ebb . . . at word of me?

She spoke to you of me?  
What did she say?  
Did her tongue move in doubt,  
Or speak in difficulty?  
Or in a hurried way,  
Fearing a secret out?  
And did she speak my name,  
Or sudden change the theme?  
Her manner did seem free,  
Treating of This and That and Me the same?  
Tell me . . . how did it seem,  
Then . . . when she spoke of me?

## IN THE DITCH

They say all men are equal born,  
But to the strong's the race.  
Lo, white beneath this wayside thorn,  
Behold thy brother's face!

For some are born of sturdy strain,  
Some of a broken reed;  
Yet they who, blameless, suffer pain,  
Have ten times greater need.

And he, whom Virtue hails at length,  
Is kin through what he hides;  
For every man who hath great strength  
A weakness hath besides.

Brother, when we two played the game,  
Ere my foot struck yon stone,  
We knew each other's Christian name.  
Now I know not mine own.

Contemn me not that I am poor,  
And let me not hate thee.  
Thou art my brother, as of yore.  
*Brother, dost thou know me?*



## THE VOICE OF THE CITY

Comes a tone, that sounds alone,  
Rising from the city to the snows;  
Strumming, drumming, humming like a zephyr in a lyre,  
Murmuring and purring like a great unhindered fire,  
That has struck a mighty measure in the burning of its treasure,  
    Without thought of pain or pity  
        As it glows!

Soft and slow, and vast and low,  
Swelling from a whisper, as the veering wind may lift  
All the thunder of a torrent in some raving, rocky rift,  
From a shiver of the river to a groan, madly blown  
    To a roar!  
That, dying, fills the ears with the fears and the tears  
    That one hears within a shell  
        On the shore!

## THE CLOISTER

Why do the wild flowers spread  
Their fairest where few tread?  
Why do the wild birds sing  
Only where echoes ring?  
Careless of what men hear or see,  
Careless of where or what men be. . .  
*Does God walk there?*

The leaves stir, yet no breeze  
Moves in the dim-lit trees.  
The carpet of the glades  
Trembles in gliding shades.  
The birds uplift a choir of song,  
The praying forest whispers long. . .  
*Does God walk there?*

## “I WILL NOT BE SHUT IN!”

What though the driven rain  
Batter against the pane,  
And the storm's might and main  
    Tear gorse and whin?  
What though the house be tight,  
Sputtering logs bright,  
Quiet the candle-light,  
    Mocking the din?—  
Let me be out of this!  
Feel the blast's biting kiss;  
Hear the sea's vicious hiss.  
    I will not be shut in!

Rain drench and cold chill,  
Out there upon the hill;  
Winds buffet, clouds mill—  
    Fighting blood's kin!  
Let me be one with these—  
Straining and battling trees,  
Driven and tortured seas,  
    Spume beaten thin,  
Down where the breakers boom,  
Fighting for wave-room  
Under the cliff's loom.  
    *They* will not be shut in!

Yet, come a reason why  
Captive I must lie,  
Roof'd in from open sky,  
    With fever'd skin—  
Still shall my Fancy make  
Sky, sea and forest-lake,  
Crag, torrent, brush and brake;  
    And stories spin!—  
Filling a golden haze  
With great adventure days,  
Sea-fights and foray-frays . . .  
    I will not be shut in!

And at the end of all,  
When dusk begins to fall,  
And comes the great call:  
    “Here Things begin!”  
When my short race is run  
Under this genial sun,  
Game lost, or prize won,  
    Still may I grin!  
What though this body die,  
This my soul's gay good-bye:  
*“Follow the Hounds! Follow the Cry!*  
    *I will not be shut in!”*

## RESURRECTION

The air is still.  
The edge of Winter's blade  
Is turned by long, hard use.  
The brown earth, fallowed rich,  
Breaks through the melting snows.  
The mountain stream  
Chants a high anthem from a bubbling heart!

The gray-haired skies  
Regain the smooth-browed calm  
Of blue-eyed youth.  
The trees, still bare,  
Yet breathe maternal mystery,  
And whisper to the eager-asking birds  
A secret prescience. And but last night,  
A cricket stirred,  
And shrilled its bell-like song across the world.

Now Flora walks abroad,  
Her fertile tread  
Leaving a magic imprint on the mould;  
And who have eyes  
May see her as she passes o'er the grass.  
Her breath is balm,  
Her gaze, compassionate warmth;  
Her finger-tips drip myrrh;  
And everything that senses her approach  
Thrills with the joy of resurrected hope.

It is the birthday of the world.  
Old earth,  
So long despairing, wakes from lethargy,  
Renewing faith the cynic, Winter, jeered.  
Life is immortal!

## THE BOTTOM OF THE WELL

Once, when with reckless feet I sped  
On blind youth's snare-set road, my head  
Lost in the clouds of pride, I fell  
Into a deep, dark well.

Out of that cell of gloom (my cries  
Unheeded, or unheard) my eyes  
I lifted to one ray of light  
Over my prison'd night.

And there, though it was daybright, save  
In this dark pit, this living grave,  
Clear in the blue, an avatar,  
Shone a great star!

Then I, who stumbled, blind of youth,  
Head in the clouds in search of truth,  
Found it while in the depths I lay,  
And took the Wise Men's way.

## THE GYPSY HEART

Once on a time—'twas the time of May—  
Lovers and just eighteen,  
We heard Pan's pipe of a Summer day,  
In a world all blue and green.  
Through the tangled woods where satyrs play,  
Merry we made our start,  
And we sought the whistle in Arcady—  
For you had the gypsy heart!

Gaily the time of our questing sped,  
When we left our native heath.  
Gaily the birds sang overhead;  
Gaily the brook beneath.  
And we laughed for Life and for Love that day,  
Sensing nor barb nor dart,  
And we found the whistle in Arcady . . .  
But you had the gypsy heart!

I played for you, and I sang for you,  
And I danced for your delight.  
You paid with a kiss that thrilled me through . . .  
But you tired of my tunes ere night.  
When again I would pleasure my love with play  
("Ah! smile again ere we part!")  
You broke my whistle in Arcady—  
You and your gypsy heart!



Once on a time—'twas the time of May . . .

But that is so long ago.

And never the same is the Summer day;

For, ah! we have suffered so!—

Walking alone, and our heads grown gray;

Love but a long-lost art;

Yet each seeking each still in Arcady . . .

All through a gypsy heart!

And now—it is Autumn now—we meet.

Is it too late, my dear?

Love lingers long upon Time's fleet feet,

And is not our love still here?

Prepared for the storms of a Summer day,

And now with a less-blind start,

Let us mend our whistle in Arcady,

Forgetting the gypsy heart!

## REDHEART SINGS —

The trees lift their crests to the sky,  
As man to the great Manitou,  
Whose head is a mountain of strength,  
His brow an unchanging rock!

His smile is the break of day,  
He thunders wrath in the storm.  
His eyes are lakes: His tears  
Merciful rivers that flow,  
Teeming with pity's gifts.  
His hair is the forest in Spring,  
Sweeping down to His feet.  
And His blanket is woven of mist,  
Dyed in the sunset!

The arm of the Chief is strong,  
And His anger swift.  
Man bends, as a bow, to His will;  
And His aim is sure.  
His eye contracts, and the shaft  
Flies!—  
Straight to the secret heart,  
Straight to the hidden game!

As the trees lift their heads to the sky,  
So man to the great Manitou!

## TEMPUS FUGIT

Lo! the gray gossamer of the years  
    Silters the days,  
And Time, that hoary spider of our fears,  
    Spins always;  
Silent, unseen, save when we lift our eyes  
Up from the living page of smiles and sighs,  
    And gaze  
Where the gray gossamer of the years  
Fills the house corners. And remembering tears  
    Deepen the haze.

## SNOW

Froth on the sea ;  
Mist on the lea ;  
White on the hill,  
Clear-cut and still ;  
Frost on the sedge ;  
Drifts on the ledge ;  
Prismatic beams where the window-pane gleams.  
And silence !

Foam that flies,  
Flutters and dies  
Softly to sleep,  
Or, as the winds sweep,  
Whirls in mad races, and traces its graces  
With fantasy's ease on the stiff, bare trees,  
In silence !

Voices so clear ;  
Whispers so near ;  
Shadows appear,  
And go,  
Out of the night,  
Into the light—  
Into the bright and shimmering white  
Of the snow ;  
Hurrying—gray—passing away,  
In silence !

## ZERO

Rides he like a rigid corse,  
Upright on a pallid horse.  
In his eyes a boreal gleam  
Slumbers like a frozen dream.  
On his brow a jewel glows,  
Scintillating like the snows,  
Where some moon-ray, over-bold,  
Falls in crystals, stricken cold.

Comes he from the phantom north,  
Where his palace walls give forth  
Rays of iridescent light  
To the clear and lip-sealed night;  
Where the still stars watch him ride  
Forth to his unwilling bride—  
Warmth that his own presence chills;  
Love that his embracing kills.

Ere that glittering hall he leaves,  
Out a courier rides and weaves  
(That we may not see him pass)  
Charms upon the window glass;  
For to see his face is death,  
Or to feel his icy breath;  
And these frozen, boreal eyes  
Can the warm blood paralyze!

So he rides, a mist-veiled corse,  
Upright on a pallid horse,  
While the moon's rim on the hill,  
Seems there welded, stark and still;  
While th' ascending smoke of fires  
Lifts to heav'n inverted spires.  
Snapping pine and whining fir  
Groan of senseless things astir—  
Shuddering rock and cracking wall,  
Strangling stream and choking fall—  
Earth inanimate's deep cry:  
*Zero, King, is passing by!*

## PACIFIC SUNSET

Turquoise and gold, a crimson wave between;  
A great star bosom'd in the loftier blue;  
A vague mirage of dusk isles' deepening green,  
With inshore waters of a ghostly hue.

A sea of frozen flame and molten ice!  
As if the north's white leagues, the boreal lights,  
The Orient's blaze, the color-thought of spice,  
Were gathered by the gods into the heights.

Or as if spirit hands, that in the dawn  
Stir delicate fires from out the ash of night,  
Swept up the leaves of day from heaven's lawn,  
And burned a splendid sacrifice of light!

## THE NIGHTINGALE

Of what avail to sing of Death?  
None but the dead will hear.  
Of what avail to sing of Life?  
The living lend no ear.

Of what avail to sing of Love?  
Only the jealous care.  
Of what avail to sing of Hate?  
Love will not turn a hair.

Of what avail to sing of Truth?  
Truth from old age is cold.  
Of what avail to sing of Faith?  
Do beggars scatter gold?

Of what avail to sing at all?  
The nightingale replies;  
"I sing to cheer a heavy heart,  
And stay the light that flies!"



## OLD MANUSCRIPTS

The room grows still,  
And from the mind escapes the errand here;  
For lo! the hand that formed, but gave no life,  
Touches once more  
Dead children in their tomb!

Dreams I dispelled  
By wording wordless things;  
Spells that I broke by seizure's rude embrace;  
Shattered as visions in a rippled pool;  
Too delicate for touch.

I had forgotten these:  
A reverie beneath a tropic moon  
Which cast a fretwork of the brooding palms  
Under my feet;  
Warm imagery's castles by a sea,  
That whispered me a tale,  
Which had no end;  
An understanding of the wind, which yet  
Sang in an unknown tongue;  
And that old yearning to inscribe on rock  
What none has dared in sand!

And here, fold-frayed and stained—  
Did not this come of reaching to the gods  
And falling from the heights?

Or was it that;  
Filled with the human thought of very self,  
I threw a soul where souls are common coin,  
None rarer or more precious than the rest,  
Or, deeming one was so,  
That one was less?

And here again:  
When was this written? Why  
This gibberish of meaningless, strung words?  
Ah . . . I remember! I was in the heights,  
And tried to bind with language some great thought,  
Which fled like wind, as light from prisoning glass—  
Or bound with ropes of clay!

Oh, still-born children, or that breathed but once;  
Pale little lights that shone athwart the dark—  
I love you as a mother loves her dead,  
More than all dreams come true!

## FAME

Beloved of all the earth, woo'd of all men,  
She smiles and frowns, favors and spurns again:  
Mistress of wide-eyed nights, visions all fair;  
Maid-o'-the-Mist upon the marsh of care—  
Fame!—so like a woman!

I send her all the sweetness of my lands;  
I send her all the labors of my hands;  
And all my pride of youth before her lay.  
She curtseys low, but then she turns away—  
Fame!—so like a woman!

I rose up with the sun and wove a chain  
Of blossoms, jewel'd with the leaf-born rain.  
She paid no heed to me or mine, the while  
She smiled on one who had not sought her smile—  
Fame!—so like a woman!

He came. He conquered! For he met her eyes  
With no abasement—nay, nor suitor sighs.  
Defiantly, despite her frown, he stood.  
Strange! . . . She fell to loving in that mood—  
Fame!—so like a woman!

## “ALLENBY ENTERS JERUSALEM!”

“We hope, by God’s Grace, to receive the Holy City of Jerusalem.”—Richard, Coeur de Lion, A. D. 1191.

Wake from thy slumbering, Heart of the Lion!  
Rise from the dream of it, centuries old.  
Look ye from Ascalon eastward to Zion,  
Where in the dawning our banners unfold!

Over the domes of the infidel enemy  
Blows the Red Cross of the Crusaders’ might;  
Over the Sepulchre, over Gethsemane,  
Ay, over Calvary, glowing with light!

Godfrey de Bouillon speeds with the tidings,  
Stirred, too, from dreams in yon Holiest Crypt,  
High in his stirrups, the dust of his stridings  
Staining the Crescent from Saladin stripped!

Nay, royal sire!—no mirage of hope dying,  
Fruit of the Dead Sea, or figment of sleep!—  
Saladin’s slain and his Saracens flying!  
God and St. George o’er Jerusalem sweep!

## THE STAR-GAZER

No sage in learning, I ;  
Yet in the night,  
When earth is dark, save twinkling lights afar,  
Marking the town asleep,  
From out the blankness of forgotten self  
A shadowy being steals,  
And the mind reels among the swaying stars!

Then from this speck of star-dust hung athwart  
The great, incomprehensible abyss,  
Where th' alternate seasons move like ghosts  
Between the spheres,  
The far-flung being of the mind drifts on,  
Asking of worlds the secret of it all!

And evermore they point  
On—on!—through ordered chaos, where the calm,  
The mighty, breathing calm,  
Seems like the desert, full of whisperings!

Infinity! And then? . . . Infinity!  
Where the mind reels among the swaying stars,  
And sinks to earth and this clay-fettered shell,  
Baffled and impotent!

## THE ROCK!

My head is white with the salt of your tears,  
    O sea of humanity!  
Yet old am I as uncounted years  
    And the shapeless day.  
As generations, wave on wave,  
Snarl, or wail, or shriek, or rave,  
    Or brag, or prate,  
Or hurl at my breast and, back-flung, die,  
Limp and shattered—what care I?  
    Am I not Fate?

My face is wet with the spray of your tears,  
    O sea of humanity!  
My shoulders worn with the load of your fears,  
    And your vanity!  
Mercy or malice know I not,  
Pity or passion, sense or thought;  
    Nor love nor hate.  
Yet do ye come with your upcurled lips,  
Flourishing crests and serried tips!  
    Know ye not Fate?

Still do ye charge with a rally-cry,  
    O sea of humanity!  
Puerile arms 'neath an empty sky.  
    Challenging *me*!  
Ho! and I hurl ye, wave on wave,

Battered and bruised, to a fighter's grave . . .  
    Yet grain by grain,  
As the fine sand falls at the feet of me,  
Worn from my bulk by the ceaseless sea,  
    All is not vain!

## TRAVEL TALES

There is a field where daisies grow,  
Where simple rivers seaward flow,  
With blue above and green below.  
Just children wander there.

There is a garden full of flow'rs,  
And butterflies, and golden hours,  
Where pleasure tends the day-dream bow'rs.  
Daughters of Eve walk there.

There is a path where night-flow'rs bloom,  
Where glow-worms light the pressing gloom,  
Where Life's the bride and Youth's the groom.  
The sons of men walk there.

There is a place where skies rain tears;  
Where gaunt trees rise, haunted by fears;  
Where every footstep galls and sears.  
Only the fool comes there!

There is a road where Autumn reigns;  
Where leaves are sere and strew the plains;  
Where Summer yields to Winter's pains.  
Even the wise come there.

But there's the field where daisies grow,  
Where simple rivers seaward flow,  
With blue above and green below.  
Come! Let us wander there!



## THE GREAT HOUR

From the peaks, drifting,  
Dies the last light.  
Dark pinions, lifting,  
Fill all heaven's height.  
Down droop the wind's wings.  
Still falls the lea.  
Hills melt and merge, and calmly  
Slumbers the sea.

Born of the last, slow  
Smile of the day,  
Earliest stars glow—  
Faint—far away;  
Jewels of tears shed  
For Beauty passed,  
As o'er the veiled body  
Night croons at last.

Day is for living;  
The night for sleep.  
Day for full giving;  
Night ours to keep.  
After the day's wage  
'Gainst men and odds,  
Forth fares the quiet sleeper,  
One with the gods!

## TRANSITION

One morn I rose and found that, overnight,  
A laughing comrade of my years had fled,  
Who was at once my bane and my delight,  
Whose bills of life on me were visited.

*Youth* was his name.

And in his place stood one, for a moment strange,  
Yet like some protean actor on the stage,  
Who plays a dual rôle on sudden change,  
And in this latter part is Middle-Age,  
Although the same.

Then, while I mourned for Youth, this other said,  
Speaking to me, as self might self address :  
"Time set a price on that young outlaw's head.  
Well could he read the signs, yet laughed no less,  
And had his day !

Now I, who fill his shoes, staid Middle-Age,  
Carry the story on, more calmly, shorn  
Of needless flame, as scorched the early page ;  
Yet bring one gift Youth, all-wise, laughed to scorn—  
Philosophy !"

## THE MYSTERY

Into the crimson radiance of the hearth,  
The Stranger came, silently, unannounced.  
None knew his name, nor whence he came, nor why.  
The Master slowly rose.  
Startled but calm, pallid but brave, and said :  
"So thou art here—at last!"

The house is empty.  
The Master hath gone upon a journey,  
(Silently into the night he went  
With him, the Stranger of the whispered word ;)  
And none knoweth if he will return.

## THE SUN-WORSHIPPER

When it shall come my time to die—  
That time men call the darkest hour—  
Bear me apart, and let me lie  
In the sun's light  
Where spruce, and pine, and cedar tower  
Beneath a cloudless, azure sky,  
In some fair glade of fern and flower . . .  
And there shall be no Night!

For I have loved the sun's dear light,  
That makes to swarm and multiply,  
Urges of Life; and, dark despite,  
Evolves each day, new-born;  
So that Death cannot signify,  
And dying's but a season's flight—  
An Autumn haze—a Winter sigh,  
Ere Spring revives at morn!

Let me have kinship with the earth,  
That thirst of re-creation slakes  
At the great fountain of re-birth—  
The sun!  
Be as the littlest flow'r that takes  
Resurgent Hope, in coma's dearth,  
From that which form and hue remakes  
When Death is done!

So, when it comes my hour to die,  
Lay me, at least, when all is o'er,  
Where sunlight may across me lie,  
And leafy shadows play;  
For, then, the clay I was before,  
Kissed by this warmth, shall magnify,  
And live, and laugh, and love once more  
In a perfect, sunlit day!

## HOME

Wherever smoke-wreaths  
    Heavenward curl—  
Cave of a hermit,  
    Hovel of churl,  
Mansion of merchant, princely dome—  
    Out of the dreariness,  
    Into its cheeriness,  
    Come we in weariness,  
    Home.

I, too, have wandered  
Through the far lands.  
Home there was their home;  
    Open, their hands.  
Yet, though all brothers, born of the foam,  
    Far o'er appalling sea,  
    Ever enthralling me,  
    Blood still was calling me  
    Home!

Men speak of jewels  
    Earth holds abroad,  
What can compare with  
    One bit of sod,  
Full of the love-gold sunk in the loam?—  
    Where lies my holy dead,  
    There, where my mother shed

Tears o'er my sleeping head—  
Home!

Home, where I first knew  
Day was alight,  
Where I would fain be  
Ere the Long Night,  
That they might write this in some old tome :  
*"This earth the womb was—  
This earth the room was—  
This earth the tomb was—  
Home!"*

## THE GILDING-STAR

There is a sea — a quiet sea,  
    Beyond the farthest line,  
    Where all my ships that went astray,  
    Where all my dreams of yesterday,  
And all things that were to be,  
    Are mine!

There is a land — a quiet land,  
    Beyond the setting sun,  
    Where every task in which I failed,  
    And all wherein my courage quailed,  
And all the good my spirit planned,  
    Is done!

There is a hope — a quiet hope,  
    Within my heart instilled,  
    That if, undaunted, on I sail,  
    This gilding-star shall never pale,  
But shine upon my labor's scope,  
    Full filled!

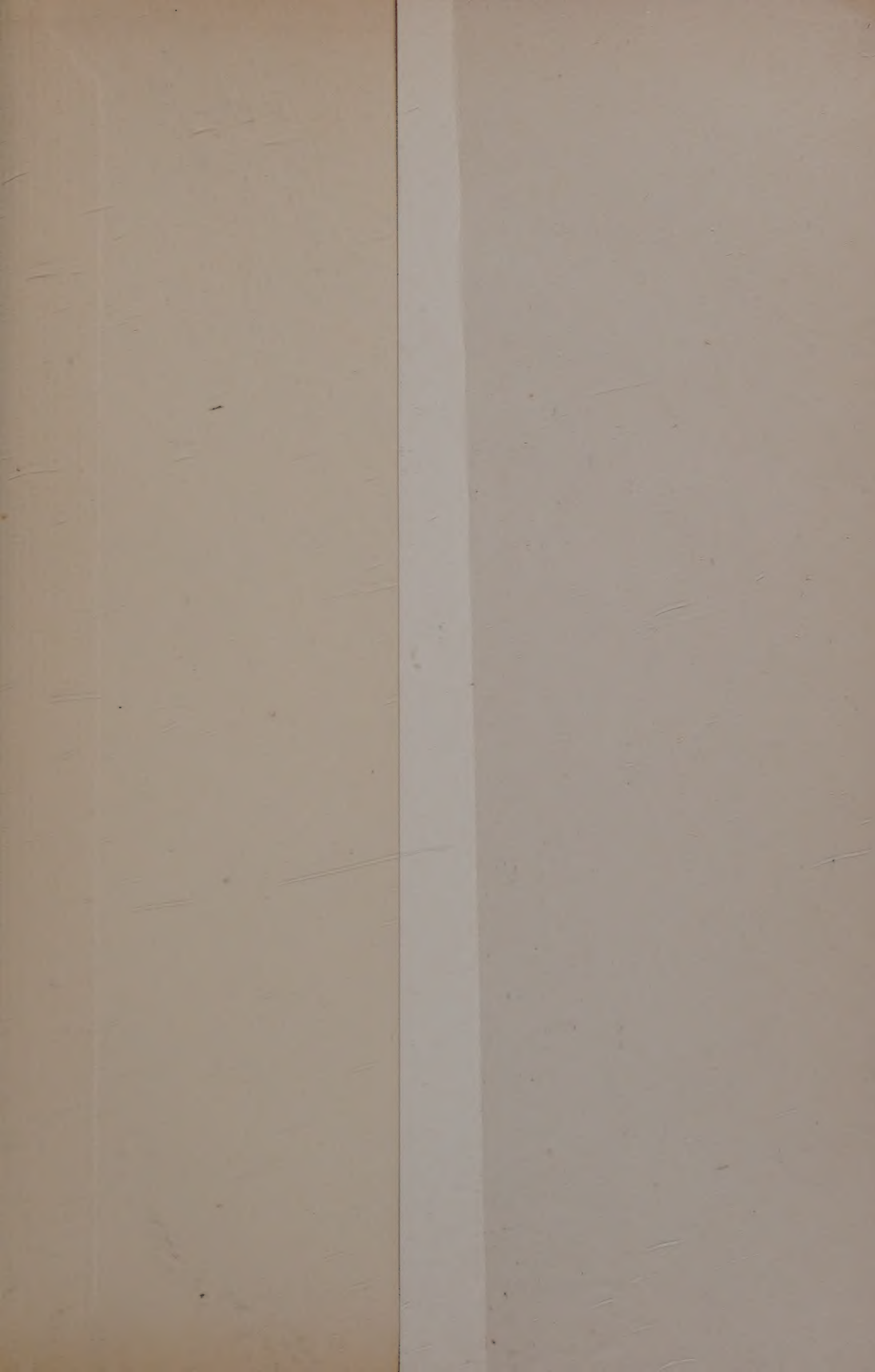
And there's a tide — a quiet tide,  
    Flowing toward the goal,  
    That sweeps by every human shore  
    And at its fullest ebbs no more;  
And on that final swell shall ride  
    My soul!











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BY  
STEPHEN CHALMERS

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Some of these verses were written at sea; some on the trail by heather, palm and pine. Many blossomed on that fruitful tree which grows in the "southeast corner" of *The New York Times*. Some of them have been set to music and sung by singers great and near-great. Twice have I seen quotations from them in standard novels. Others are leaves from yesterday's magazines and a few first saw light in a little newspaper once published in an Adirondack forest village. If here and there the lines seem to reflect alternating sunshine and shadow, rebellious storm and philosophic calm, they may encounter similar weather in the moods of others, and bring to the latter a little of the light of fellow-feeling, the comfort of a common understanding, at the close of the Long Day.

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